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# WHITHER CONSTRUCTIVE WORK?

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PRINCIPAL, EXTENSION TRAINING CENTRE, GANDHIGRAM.

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By

G. Ramachandran

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ALL-INDIA VILLAGE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION
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# Foreword

This booklet represents more or less the mental agony of a large body of workers in the field of Gandhiji's Constructive Programme. They represent workers who are dissatisfied with much that is going on at present in the life and affairs of our country. Their mind is not at ease with the various actions or inactions of the Government, the Congress and the various Constructive Workers' Organizations. The sudden death of Gandhiji has removed the one effective leader, director and co-ordinator of all the forces. None has taken, his place and there is none, whom they will all agree to put there and obey with all their devotion.

This result is in keeping with the age-long traditions of our country. From *Mahabharat* onwards, our history shows that whether the field of activity be war, civil rule, or religious organisation, the death of the general, the leading administrator, or the Master has been followed by rout and disintegration, or division into dozens of small bodies and groups, each under a separate non-co-operating leader. And curiously this takes place with even greater rapidity, where the followers are free from desire for wealth, ease and self-indulgence and are personally men of high character.

It is a defect for which the country has suffered heavily in the past, and must suffer again and again until it is removed.

The defect is in our highly individualistic philosophy. Gandhiji said that a servant of man must reduce himself to zero. We cannot do that. We aspire either to be the all

embracing one and all of our universe, or to recede further into the 'Beyond zero'. The result is that we would either renounce social life, or create a world of our own however small.

Another defect in our national system is that we have not yet evolved a technique of training which will ensure a line of able successors. Our country has never lacked in brilliant men, but rarely is a brilliant head of any organization of our country able to attract to himself a sufficient number of brilliant colleagues or assistants, or to induce himself to work with or under them. The result is that after his death his work falls to pieces or turns into an unprogressive sect We have to remedy this defect by a suitable *Nai Talim* of 'Social Education'.

My own attitude towards the question "Whither Constructive Work?" is that the root of the disease is in the Constructive Workers themselves. When Gandhiji circularised among some of his friends the plan of his Satyagraha Ashram with his list of eleven vows, one of the friends suggested that he should add one more vow to the list namely, Humility. Gandhiji said that he assumed it; for no vow could be observed without it. Gandhiji thought so, because that virtue was ingrained in him from birth and it needed only attentiveness to allow it to grow. Perhaps he also thought that to make a vow of it might result in the creation of Uriah Heaps. He did not realize that humility needed to be carefully developed with a majority of workers of second class goodness like ourselves. Let us realize that, instead of finding out which are the obtuse and acute angles of the supposed right-angled parallelogram of which we also are an angle, if we ourselves can become a right-angle, the whole parallelogram is bound to become a right-angled one.

Now about the various specific points touched by Shri Ramachandran : it is right that we should have a picture of a Sarvodaya order of life, worked out as early as possible ; it is also necessary that the Constructive Workers should not be merely fault-finders of the present system, or its leaders, but should have a clear plan of the way in which they would solve the various problems that arise from time to time in the political, social and economic administration of the country; education of the voters and interest in the political machine of the country must also be not neglected; agriculture and agro-industries are, of course, a very important part of the country's reconstruction. But along with all this we must also remember that the crux of the whole problem is the liberation of the society from, what Vinobaji calls, the tentacles of money-economy. This might be stated also as the transformation of the commercial mindedness of the modern economic order into Sarvodaya-mindedness in industrial pursuits and social life. If the economic activities of the people are freed of commerce, i. e. if people produce, transport, distribute, or consume articles not primarily for trade and commerce but for the full development of the life of the whole community, problems such as those of centralization, and decentralization, large scale and small scale industries, mechanization and manual labour, cities and villages would wear a different aspect from what they do at present.

But it is no use merely laying down even this as the most important problem. We must also be able to point the way to achieve it. Even if it is a long way, it does not matter, provided it can carry conviction of achievability. Further, if it is a long process, we must decide upon the first step towards it. It should be one which we can place

before the whole country and ask the people to carry out, and engage all our workers in, even as the Congress engages them when elections are imminent. Such a first step is more important than all the other preparations of plans and educative propaganda of voters. Let us concentrate on finding and working out this first step. It should be something in which Government and their personnel, the people, men and women, aged and young, of cities as well as villages can all be approached to take part, and which will produce something new or save something from waste and destruction It must also be something of which we can take stock at the end of a year. It should be valuable educationally and economically; and be producer of social equality among people of all denominations. It should also be capable of further growth in course of time, like the seed of a great tree.

If we are a nation, there must be a few principles, which all people, whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, and whether Congressites, Socialists, Communists, Gandhites or others, regard as binding on them.

The writer is young, energetic and brilliant. He has had the benefit of being trained by both Tagore and Gandhi. He does not speak in this booklet for himself only, but represents the youth among the Constructive Workers. I suggest to him and his co-thinkers to apply their mind to the seeking of the next step on the lines indicated above. Let them move about, see and think out for themselves, invite from others, and discuss with both seniors and juniors, an immediate programme for Sarvodaya. They must not rest content with asking "Whither Constructive Work ? " but proceed to say, "Here is immediate Constructive Work", and put all their strength to organize it. The senior colleagues of Gandhiji-

like Sardar and Thakkar Bapa-have retired into eternity. Those that remain might follow them one after another in perhaps rapid succession, or become incapacitated to work. Some of them have lost their freshness of mind. Let not the younger generation simply look expectantly at the seniors for new policies and fresh approaches. They must themselves decide the lines of their action and proceed to work. The seniors will help them to the best of their capacity.

Wardha, 22nd January 1951. K. G. Mashruwala

# WHITHER CONSTRUCTIVE WORK?

# I

Some will say, "Why ask this question?" Where can Constructive Work lead except to Rama Rajya? Constructive Work of the Gandhian pattern, carried out by men and women of faith, will lead to a new world. What does it matter if the Central and State Governments of independent India do not help and even obstruct? Did we not carry on Constructive Work in the teeth of opposition and persecution under British rule? But these are not the issues for the present discussion. No one can doubt the power of faith and of the dedication to Constructive Work. The writer himself has been in it more or less during the last twentyfive years. He is not offering today any challenge to the few to whom Gandhian Constructive Work is their mission in life.

Gandhiji gave us the Constructive Programme not merely to help win political freedom. He wanted to win freedom and to keep it for the masses. The question today is, "Has the advent of political freedom made Constructive Work fuller or has it knocked the bottom out of it?" That is to put it strongly. But it is better to do so, so that there will be no evasion of the issue.

Is there any doubt anywhere that so far as the Central Government and most of the Governments in the States are concerned the bottom is being knocked out of the Constructive Programme? That bottom is not only the faith of the undefeatable few. It is also the conditions for the quick growth of the Constructive Programme into its fullness. Occasionally some ambiguity is created because some

Minister here or there sings the praise of the Constructive Programme and refers to Gandhiji as the Father of the Nation. Such ambiguity spreads confusion in the minds of the people.

Constructive workers will not break their hearts if their erstwhile comrades, who have become the rulers of India, repudiate the Constructive Programme. That will only put them on their test. What is heart-breaking, however, is the lack of clarity in the situation for the common man. The common man, who believes in Gandhiji, is misled into the idea that the Central and State Governments are dedicated to carry out Gandhian programmes. Why should not our leaders come out openly and declare that the Constructive Programme with the villages at the centre is impossible, that khadi and village industries cannot occupy the centre of national economic reconstruction, that the Hindustani Talimi Sangh's pattern of Basic Education has to be considerably modified, that the Go-Seva Sangh's opposition to Vanaspati is wrong ? The painful tragedy is that our Governments wish to keep alive the false idea that they are carrying out the Gandhian programmes, while at the same time they are doing most things contrary. This psychological rift will some day act as a boomerang. It will hurt the Constructive Programme and the Government. Confusion is not good for any programme of work. Why should we not then clear the issues beyond any doubt for anybody ?

We have the Central Government and the Governments of the various States. In the present set up the Central Government exercises a dominating influence over the States Governments. This is due partly to the wide powers vested in the Central Government under the Constitution and because some of the most influential leaders of

the country are in it. Recently I had the opportunity of discussing with the Ministers of two of our States, programmes of village reconstruction. One was from the South and the other from the North. And yet curiously both of them said to me what was more or less the same thing. They said that the Central Government adopted all India policies and programmes which made the Constructive Programme of Gandhiji look absurd in the eyes of the people. There are Ministers in the Governments of some at least of the States who are keen on working out the Constructive Programme. But they cannot go far, in view of all India policies and programmes laid down by the Central Government. To Constructive workers, who are carefully watching the situation, it is becoming clear that the Central Government's plans for national reconstruction are very different from those implicit in the Constructive Programme.

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# II

Our leaders now say that the Constructive Programme under Gandhiji was all right as part of the freedom movement in the old days. In free India, however, the Constructive Programme has only a very minor and even questionable place. They are entitled to their opinion. But in the Constructive Programme Gandhiji put before the people some very clear patterns of social reconstruction. There is not the slightest doubt whatever that Gandhiji wanted to build up a new social order on those patterns. The important points may be briefly stated. Since more than 80% of the people live in the villages, village economy must occupy the centre of socio-economic reconstruction in India. The major occupation in villages is agriculture. Agriculture, unaided by agro-industries, cannot sustain the prosperity of the people. Agro-industries are village industries using village raw materials and local talent and resources, to produce most of what villagers need for themselves. It is the birthright of the villager to use local materials, resources and talents to give himself profitable employment without being made the victim of avoidable exploitation from outside. Therefore Khadi, Village Industries, Go Seva and Basic Education are of the utmost importance. Big and centralized industries are not taboo, but they should never be allowed to ruin decentralized village economy aiming at the maximum possible self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Big business should not be allowed to plunge villages into ruin and neglect.

It is too late in the day for any one to say that Gandhiji himself did not consider these items as vital in his

long range plan to build up a prosperous, happy and strong India. Any one may say that Gandhiji was wrong in his analysis and in his programme for India. Let no one say however, it was not Gandhiji's analysis or his long range programme for India.

The Central Government has repudiated the whole of the Gandhian analysis and programme without any clear and unambiguous declaration that the Constructive Programme was mistakenly conceived and is quite impracticable. Ministers and leaders scrupulously put on Khadi and often exhort people to do Constructive Work and at the same time do everything which will make Khadi and Constructive Work look ridiculous and unwanted. What is now needed is the immediate escape from this contradiction.

Neither the Central Government nor the State Governments have formulated any definite policy in regard to Khadi or Village Industries. Whatever little is being done for Khadi or Village Industries is done in a haphazard way and not on the basis of any accepted or declared policy. Confusion has thus become worse confounded. I seriously suggest that the time has certainly come for Central and State Governments to formulate and declare their policy in relation to Khadi and Village Industries. Once Government's policy is laid down, whatever it be, it will help Constructive work. We shall welcome nothing to-day more than clarity in this regard.

# III

Now what about the responsibility of the Constructive workers themselves. In one sense this is the sadder part of the story. On the whole, Constructive workers in various fields are to-day doing more service to the people and are more in touch with them than any other group in India. And yet they are unable to influence general direction or national policy. The workers in the Charkha Sangh, the A. I. V. I. A., the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Talimi Sangh, the Kasturba Trust, the Go Seva Sangh and the Hindustani Prachar Sabha have jointly an army of workers. But there is neither co-ordination nor even enough co-operation. Each organization is looking after its own special work and is unconcerned with what the others are doing. And, moreover Constructive workers take no interest in political affairs and consider politics to be sin. But politics and politicians are to-day, more than ever before, influencing general direction and national policy. Will it do to hand over the country to persons who will, consciously or otherwise, destroy Constructive Work and then bemoan that those set up in authority do not help Constructive Work ? If Central and Provincial Governments, making use of hundreds of crores of rupees taken from the people, plan and organize contrary to the Constructive Programme, how long can Constructive workers hold out with their limited resources ? In such a position can faith alone count ? Are not Constructive workers shirking their imperative duty, if they are not educating the people to understand the significance of the Constructive Programme and to make them demand that those in authority must take up the Programme ?

So long as Constructive workers confine the whole of their attention to the work they do, within the circumference of their own separate organizations, they will never be able to reach out and touch the minds of the peeple as a whole. The first imperative necessity is for all Constructive workers to come together under an over-all guidance. So long as Bapu was with us, he stood in the place of such a guidance. In his absence we have to make up by organizational unity. The Sarva Seva Sangh, therefore, must be made more real than it is to-day. Secondly instead of placing before the people separate programmes of Constructive Work at separate points, we need an over-all plan and an over-all programme. Therefore the Sarvodaya Plan, drawn up some time ago, must be taken up with greater vigour and enthusiasm. Thirdly, all Constructive workers must realise that they have hardly touched the general mind of the people, and therefore, they must all come out of their own ruts and meet the people face to face at points outside their own separate organizations. In other words the frogs must come out of their wells and meet the larger and challenging world outside. These are but casual suggestions. The whole matter must be rethought out by all genuine Constructive workers. I also strongly plead that Constructive workers must not look upon political action as sin. Politics is only as dirty as we make it. This is true of even religion, but de we, therefore, run away from religion ? This is not a plea in favour of power politics but for participation in the fundamental politics which go down to the roots of the life of the people. Take the question of food production or the need for self-sufficiency in various directions at the present crisis in India. Take again the question of communalism which has become a subtler and a greater danger than Communism in our country. Take again the

question of nationalisation of land and industries versus private ownership. What of the landless agricultural labourer who is to-day the worst under-dog in the whole country? What again of the criminal misuse of land for money crops while food crops lack adequate land? Every one of these questions is a political question in the country to-day. Bapu himself blended Constructive Work and politics in everything that he did. We may not to-day merely imitate him. But we must take from him the essential direction and approach which he symbolised. He treated life as a whole and on a vast canvass. We may not be able to reach out on such a vast canvass, but we shall plan without treating life as a whole only at the peril of everything we stand for. Such unity is not merely an abstraction but a living, pulsing and dynamic thing which must be handled with courage and conviction. Have Constructive workers only small solutions for small problems or have they an over-all plan embodying solutions for all the major problems affecting the country? This is the challenge that Constructive workers have to meet and the only answer so far has been the Sarvodaya Plan, which was made recently and which has since then been forgotten. Even that is only a sketchy and outline plan. Will Constructive workers enlarge it, fill it up and then work it out? On the answer to this question depends the entire future of the Gandhian Constructive Programme. If we cannot act in a big way in regard to big issues, we shall presently settle down comfortably like many little sects and *panths*, which have persisted through the centuries, without affecting life as a whole vitally. Let Constructive workers not run away from challenging problems calling them politics. And if Constructive workers have the power of genuine introspection, will they not admit that there is more *politics* to-day in their Constructive work and as amongst Constructive workers themselves than in politics itself?

Thus the burden rests heavily on Constructive workers to save the whole of the Gandhian plan for a better, happier and more peaceful world.

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# IV

Two things have happened which are hopeful signs. From the side of the Constructive workers there is the emergence of the Sarva Seva Sangh. The sign available from the side of the politicians in the Congress is the strong and clear support given to Khadi and Village Industries by Shri Purushottamdas Tandon in his Congress Presidential address at Nasik.

Some time before the passing of Gandhiji, he had suggested the idea of a Sarva Seva Sangh and commissioned Shri J. C. Kumarappa to find out the possibilities in that direction. Since then the Sarva Seva Sangh was born, somewhat hesitantly, and as a mild co-ordinating body attempting to bring together more closely the various constructive work organizations. At Angul, during the Sarvodaya Sammelan, proposals were made that the various organizations should, partially at least, merge in the Sarva Seva Sangh. Since then, the Go Seva Sangh has expressed its readiness to completely merge in the Sarva Seva Sangh and the A. I. V. I. A has, at its last All India Board meeting held on the 22nd September, passed a resolution to the same effect. The Charkha Sangh is only willing to treat the Sarva Seva Sangh as an Advisory Body with which it is willing to co-operate without merging in it. The Hindustani Prachar Sabha has also thought on the lines of a merger under the guidance of Shri Kaka Saheb. The Hindustani Talimi Sangh has not yet made clear its final attitude. There is and cannot be any compulsion in this matter. It is clear that events and circumstances will make it easier, sooner than later, for the various organizations to decide to merge in the Sarva Seva Sangh.

Only the Sarva Seva Sangh can ultimately become the living body and form of the philosophy and spirit of Mahatma Gandhi. It is now well known that Shri Acharya Vinobaji has blessed the idea of complete merger of all the organizations in the Sarva Seva Saugh, even while he is keen that every organization should be allowed full time to make up its own mind.

The need to-day is even more for unity in work than for organizational integration. What is needed is a functional integration. Till now the country has had no opportunity to understand what is the overall plan of Constructive workers for nation building. People know that Khadi is important and so are Village Industries, Go Seva, Basic Education and Hindustani. But how each of these will integrate with the rest to complete the picture of a new social order based on justice and non-violence has not been demonstrated yet. The structural theory of it has been carefully elucidated in Shri J. C. Kumarappa's book *An Overall Plan for Rural Development*. If we are to find solutions for problems on a national scale then we cannot do without an overall plan and without a demonstration as to how it can be implemented. Hence the imperative need to-day for the Sarva Seva Sangh and also the tremendous opportunity before it. The proposals at Angul were that, if the different organizations came together under the Sarva Seva Sangh, then each one of them will have to steadily go on to Samagra Grama Seva from their own foundations. The different units moving simultaneonsly towards Samagra Grama Seva would ultimately make it the real pattern. The Sarva Seva Sangh could then make that pattern universal in the country. The Sarva Seva Sangh has thus to become a growing light in the present darkness.

The vigorous support given to Khadi and Village Industries by Shri Purushottamdas Tandon as the President of the Congress at Nasik has also not come a day too soon. The following is the full text of the resolution which the Congress has solemnly adopted at Nasik :—

"The Congress is of the opinion that in all schemes for increasing the production of wealth in the country, it is essential that the vast man power in the villages should be progressively utilized. Employment should be given to the millions who have no land to cultivate, or whose holdings are so small as to leave much time at their disposal for other gainful employment. This should lead to the general adoption of a policy of encouraging and organizing home industries.

Khadi, which Congressmen have for years adopted for their use on political and economic grounds, is the central home industry which can give employment to a very large number of our rural population. Several other subsidiary industries can be helped by an increase in the production of Khadi.

The best way of assisting Khadi and other home industries is to give them the benefit of scientific research in the fullest measure.

With improved technique and coordination with large-scale industries, the disadvantage of quality and prices, as compared with the products of largescale industry, will greatly diminish. To overcome other handicaps that still remain, Government should give further assistance in suitable form, particularly by the purchase and use of khadi and other products of village industries as much as possible."

It is to be earnestly hoped that Central and State Govrernments will not try to evade the challenge of this resolution. It would be no evasion for them to say that in the altered circumstances in the country, khadi and village industries have lost much of their old significance and that they cannot help increasing the number or efficiency of the mills and that village industries are neither economic nor suitable at the present time. That will be opposition to the programme of Constructive workers, Such opposition will not in the long run weaken Constructive Work. It might well weaken those in authority in their relation to the common people. But if the various Governments will not declare their policy unambiguously in relation to khadi and village industries and yet do little or nothing for them, that will be evasion and worse than opposition.

The interesting question is, how far and how often can Congress Governments at the Centre and in the States make plans which nullify Congress resolutions? it is one thing to say that Governments cannot accept dictation from anyone or anywhere in their day to day administration and totally another thing for party Governments to nullify the resolutions of the parent organization which set up these very Governments, If the Governments concerned will act up to the spirit and basis of the resolution then the widening gulf between the people and them can be successfully bridged.

If therefore, on the one hand the Sarva Seva Sangh will become more and more real and on the other various Governments can be induced to be more honest in regard to the Constructive Programme, then something of a silver lining might become discernible on the dark horizon. The duty thus devolves on the Sarva Seva Sangh and

Central and State Governments to come together in making plans for national reconstruction. There is already some representation given to the Sarva Seva Sangh on the Advisory Board of the Planning Commission. It would be more worthwhile to establish closer, contact between Constructive workers and the Committees set by the various States under the Planning Commission.

# V

What then can Constructive workers do? This is a big question to answer. But the following may be illustrative of what Constructive workers can do to-day to save the greatest work of the greatest man of the present epoch of our history.

1. Constructive workers should realize that the static mind will be the ruin of all their work, All Constructive Work going on should be made more broad based on the understanding will of the masses. Constructive workers should reach out to fresh fields of vital need and thus keep on growing themselves along with their work. They must pull out of the ruts of routine and traditions of their own work. There is, for instance, the problem of land and agriculture in our country. For a variety of reasons Gandhiji did not include this work in the Constructive Programme during the period of our struggle for freedom. Land and agriculture were so overwhelmingly dominated by the direct agencies of the British Government that Gandhiji thought it would be unwise to attack the evil of slavery at that point. But to-day, under altered conditions, the inescapably foundational character of land and agriculture challenges us at every turn we take in Constructive Work. The Charkha Sangh, the All India Village Industries Association, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Talimi Sangh, the Go Seva Sangh and the Kasturba Trust have all to grapple with this problem if they want to press on with their own works to comprehend the whole life of the people. In the whole of Harijan work to-day there is no more pressing problem than that of giving even minimum living and working space to the Harijans. In fact the Harijan Sevak Sangh

is standing helpless today in the face of this challenge. Harijans form perhaps the majority of landless agricultural labour in our country. Then again nearly half of agricultural labour in villages is feminine labour and therefore the Kasturba Trust has also to reckon with it, if they wish to organize women in villages for a better and fuller life. No organization of Constructive Work, which has so far specialized in any particular item, need give up its own emphasis or contribution. But they have all to combine in dealing with the basic problem of land and agriculture from their own points for work.

Instances like these to indicate the vital need to dig the roots of Constructive Work deeper into the soil of reality and to extend the branches in the ever widening sky of fresh needs, can be easily multiplied.

2 By thus keeping to their own foundations and yet reaching out to solve new problems, Constructive workers will find their unity more fully. It is the task of building up such organic unity of all Coustructive Work that has fallen on the Sarva Seva Sangh. The unity of all Constructive Work must now be achieved within and through the Sarva Seva Sangh. The paramount need, therefore, is to strengthen the Sarva Seva Sangh and to make it more real as the overall instrument of Constructive Work.

3. No time should be lost for organizing regional conferences of Constructive workers to make plans for co-ordination and extension and even to take up fresh items of work. These smaller conferences should, within the next few months, lead to an All India Conference of Constructive Workers. Besides considering the problems connected with their own work, the Conference should also consider how

Constructive workers can best influence the shaping of policies and programmes of National Planning. As Gandhiji once said, if the Constructive workers will take care of the voters the voters will take care of the country. In other words, there should now be a plan to educate the voters to send into the Legislatures and into the Governments only those pledged to carry out the Constructive Programme and to the reconstruction of the villages on the Gandhian pattern. Constructive workers will not hesitate to accept the idea that a Government has to be a Government and that, therefore, certain unaviodable compromises may have to be made. For instance it would be necessary to nurture certain large-scale industries It will be necessary, therefore, to define the sectors for decentralized and centralized industries. The broad principle might well be, that it is the birthright of the villagers to give profitable employment to themselves by producing goods from local materials and resources and by utilizing local talents without big business being allowed to step in and ruin their internal economy. But there are things which the villager under village conditions cannot make and these might be left to large-scale industries, preferably under Government control. In any case adult education, in the widest sense, including political education, becomes the paramount duty of every Constructive worker. The last 3 years have already been of crucial importance in deciding the pattern of future National Reconstruction. But Constructive workers were unable to influence the shaping of policies and programmes which have now begun to hold the field, If the next 5 to 7 years pass on in the same way, Constructive work, as setting the National pattern, will be doomed. It will then exist only as a symbol.

The triple burden on Constructive workers is thus one of fresh experimentations, unification and influencing of State

policies. Constructive workers are groping for leadership of the highest quality in this crisis. Top ranking Constructive workers have crippled themselves completely by clinging to the view that any political action is sin. This is the new slave mentality from which Constructive workers must find a way out. They need not strike out for power or position for themselves. But they must take up the task of training and organizing the voters to be active and effective citizens to promote the making of a "Constructive Work State" They will thus help the people to go further than with a "Welfare State"

May Constructive workers, therefore, in the coming years, always look ahead and never behind, may they achieve their own unity in the universal human family of Gandhi and may they purify, not only the individual or dedicated groups, but the whole of society.

# VI

## Some Questions and Answers

Some questions came after these notes appeared in the Gram Udyog Patrika. The Chief Minister of one of the States wrote as follows;—

"In your latest Gram Udyog Patrika of October, 1950 you suggest that it would be a worthwhile idea to establish closer contacts between Constructive Workers and the Committees set up by the various States under the Planning Commission. We have set up a Rural Development Board and also an Inter-Departmental Planning Commission. The latter has been appointed under instructions from the Central Planning Commission and consists of Heads of Departments only. I would like you to let me know how this contact can be established,"

The Chief Minister has long been closely associated with Gandhian Constructive work. Reference has already been made to the fact that some representation was given to the Sarva Seva Sangh on the Advisory Board of the Central Planning Commission. It was also suggested earlier that it would be a good thing to establish similar, if not closer, contacts between Constructive Workers and the Committees set up by the various States under the Planning Commission. There was no admission that what little had been conceded was satisfactory. Two persons at least should have been included in the National Planning Commission itself and not in any Advisory Board only. These are Shri Shrikrishnadas Jaju and Shri J. C. Kumarappa. On the other hand what was done was to take

two representatives from the Sarva Seva Sangh on the Advisory Board of the Planning Commission with its large membership. There is then the Cottage Industries Board of the Central Government, on which also some little representation is given to Constructive Workers. These concessions indicate not so much Government's anxiety to admit the Constructive Programme in National planning as their pious wish not to appear as throwing overboard the same Programme. But no Government in India worth the name can put aside Village reconstruction work. They may give up the Gandhian pattern of village reconstruction and run after the Japanese pattern. But they cannot run away from village reconstruction itself. Some at least of the Ministers at the Centre and in the States know all about Constructive work. Why should not the Governments concerned accept the Charkha Sangh, the A. I. V. I. A., the Talimi Sangh, the Go Seva Sangh, the Kasturba Trust etc., as the experts in village reconstruction and unreservedly accept their advice for a nationwide programme of Rúral Development. Here it is not a question of the Government giving up its plans and programmes of industrialization but merely putting rural reconstruction work in charge of those who know that work and were trained in it under Gandhiji. That such an arrangement is impossible today shows, more clearly than anything else, how the betrayal of theMaster has begun at the hands of those who have come to power through the freedom movements lead by Gandhiji and which drew strength from Constructive work.

There are Rural Development Boards and Inter-Departmental Planning Committees in all the States. What real Constructive work is possible when the Planning Committees consist only of Heads of Departments who are officers, who were once the props of the British Government in India ?

They have nothing but contempt for khadi and village industries. They were used to wasting a lot of public money on Rural Development schemes and so-called Cottage Industries which were approved more for their fancy and exhibition value than as programmes for the economic uplift of the large masses of people living in villages. Why should not the Central and State Governments take advice from and be guided by organizations like the Charkha Sangh, the A. I V. I. A, the Go-Seva Sangh etc., in village reconstruction work? No one from these organizations is looking out for big office or salary, but it is their life mission to carry on village reconstruction work along lines laid down by Gandhiji. Governments are importing foreign Advisers for various Departments on very high salaries. Why should they not accept as their advisers for village reconstruction their own erstwhile comrades who have specialised in the work for a quarter of a century?

A friend, who has given his whole life to work in villages, wrote as follows:—

"It is now absolutely clear that the Central and State Governments will do nothing to promote the Constructive Programme. Is it not therefore the duty of Constructive Workers to unite in protest against the present misdirection and to fight the various Governments on this issue?"

Constructive workers can protest and fight only in their own way. It is not for them to jump into power politics. They have to widen and deepen their work and cover the whole country with their effort. They must carry the people with them and the people must be trained to be active instead of passive citizens of the villages. There is now adult suffrage and so every voter should be educated

to cast his vote only for candidates pledged to carry out the Constructive Programme. Also wherever clearly necessary Constructive Workers should and must join together to fight, here and now, policies and programmes calculated to ruin village economy and to bolster up city vested interests. Constructive Workers have, therefore, to move forward in any case with the double method of their own work and of Satyagraha or direct non-violent action.

There are now many parties in India, Congress, Socialist, Communist, Communalist etc. They have all their workers spread out in the country, and their own programmes. But if we take all the workers of the Charkha Sangh, the All India Village Industries Association, the Go Seva Sangh, the Talimi Sangh, the Kasturba Trust, the Hindustani Prachar Sabha and of the various Ashrams and Institutions of Constructive Work, it can be shown that there are more whole time workers in the Constructive Programme than in any other party or Programme. And yet other parties and groups are able more effectively to influence the people than Constructive workers. This is so because Constructive workers in different and separate fields are unable to unite and pull their full weight together. If they can unite effectively, then their influence in shaping national policy will be undoubtedly great.

# VII

## More questions and answers.

Many more questions have come in. Two of them are more than mere questions. They are a challenge, friendly but insistent. These two questions are, "Have you a plan yourself?" and "What is the first step?" Shri Kishorlalji has also emphasised the second of these questions in his forward. He has put it this way, "Such a first step is more important than all the other preparations of plans and educative propaganda of voters. Let us concentrate on finding and working out this first step. It should be something in which the Government and their personnel, the people, men and women .........can all be appealed to take part and which will produce something new or save something from waste and destruction. It must also be something of which we can take stock at the end of a year. It should be valuable educationally and economically and be producer of social equality among people of all denominations. It should also be capable of further growth in course of time like the seed of a great tree."

It is not possible to lay down all the details of a plan. Some sketch of a plan has already been indicated in the previous pages. These ideas may be summarised as follows:-

1. Regional conferences of Constructive Workers should be organised immediately leading upto an All India Conference early. These conferences must be held on the specific issue of how Constructive Workers can effectively influence National Planning here and now.

2. Steps should be taken to develop the experimental and research side of Constructive work so that Constructive work itself may pull out of the ruts into which it has sometimes fallen.

3. Steps should be taken to plunge into fresh avenues of service of the people so that Constructive work will take up the challenge of fresh situations in the country. The rehabilitation of the Refugees on a permanent basis and the problem of landless agricultural labour are typical instances.

4. The education of the new large mass of adult voters so that village voters will strengthen the party or the group which will undertake the Gandhian Constructive Programme.

5. The drawing up of an over-all plan of social reconstruction for a casteless and classless society through non-violent methods. Such a plan will have to make it clear that Constructive Workers are not impossible idealists resdy to let the country into chaos in pursuit of extreme theories.

6. Such a plan should be placed before the people for their verdict and, if acceptable to the people, it should be implemented by stages but within a specific period of years.

7. The first step in such a plan will be very important and must be carefully planned in detail by a Committee of the best Constructive Workers. The idea should be that the first step should be capable of leading up to the second and subsequent steps.

Shri Kishorlalji's suggestion that the first step is more important than anything else thus arises naturally

from any practical plan of work It would be worthwhile to consider what might be the suitable first step. There will be many suggestions and many of the suggestions might be equally excellent. The following suggestions are made only in that tentative spirit. They may be considered seriously along with other suggestions that might come up.

The present crisis in the country undoubtedly points to the inevitable first step we must take. It is production of more food. More food and better nutrition might well be the cry of a new revolution in Constructive work. It is a work in which every one can join. It would be truly a movement of mass education. The whole campaign must be conducted in the spirit and method of Nai Talim. A comprehensive and detailed plan should be drawn up by Constructive Workers and placed before the Government and the people. Constructive work organisations and institutions, schools, colleges, officials and non-officials and the people generally must all join together into a great voluntary land army for the above purpose. Here again, what is required is dynamic leadership.

Closely related to the problem of food and nutrition is that of sanitation and health. Some time ago the present writer put forward through the pages of the Sarvodaya edited by Shri Acharya Vinobaji "A Programme for a National Sanitation drive for one year". That programme is included as an appendix to this little volume A good first step is there. The plan is there. The more difficult thing is to implement it. It cannot be implemented without creating great moral momentum in the country. That is where we must rediscover the Gandhian technique of action. Whenever he put forward a major item of work he first aroused the conscience of the people. He toured the country, explained

his programme to millions of people, talked, wrote and thus educated the masses and then himself lead the way. It is not that there are no plans. The question is where are the leaders who would do what Gandhiji did. There is no other way. Thus alone can we rediscover our national shakti.

Ultimately every programme depends on clear understanding and strong will. It is our duty to create clear understanding and to energise the will of the people. Leaders of Constructive work must come out of their retreats and give the call and generate moral momentum and lead the way. The people are not fools. They know their own needs. They are sure to be willing to work for their own redemption. At the present time it is not the people who have failed. It is the leaders who are failing them. The need is for commensurate leadership.

It is true that Gandhiji cannot be replaced. The greatest tribute to him however will be that we carry on the work as though he were still with us. Luckily also there are still with us many of those who were his most outstanding co-workers in the Constructive Programme. They still weild an influence over the mind of the common people which only a few among the political leaders possess. If they will only unite and give a call to the people there will be real response. There is nothing less than an army of workers scattered over the whole country, who are ploughing their own lonely furrows waiting and hoping for such a call. If a programme of action, which can unite the people and uplift them in a great common endeavour can be drawn up over the joint signatures of Shri Acharya Vinobaji, Shri Kishorlalji, Shri Jajuji, Shri Kaka Saheb, Shri Kumarappaji and a few others, who are all outside power politics, then creative forces can still be generated

which will change the present frustration into the glowing substance of great achievements. The saddest of all facts in the present situation however is that these great leaders of Constructive Work are themselves un-able to pull together and each one is burried in some particular work of his own. But they are the men to whom the imperishable spirit of Gandhi will turn to-day, to make his message and work grow from more to more in the lives of the millions, whom he served with an understanding and a devotion without a parallel in our history. Therefore, to the leaders who expect the young to march forward comes the returning bitter cry that they themselves should set the pattern of the unity of head and heart in the name of the Master whose spirit still hovers warm and close to the soul of the people.

Appendix

# PROGRAMME FOR A NATIONAL SANITATION DRIVE FOR ONE YEAR

## Preface:

Bapu always insisted that Sanitation was the first step in Village work. That this is so must be clear to any one who has done any real village work. If sanitation is thus the first step in village work, why are so many workers trying to do so many things in the villages without first taking up Sanitation. The tradition somehow grew up in India at some time, that the best way to deal with insanitation was to run away from all filth. Many village workers even today turn away from this foundational work in some such spirit. This is fatal. Most other work in villages will be unreal without Sanitation work. For, what is dirt and filth at one end becomes disease and death at the other end. To do village work, therefore, without attending to Sanitation is like attempting to live after making every preparation to get killed.

And yet dirt and filth, which are so dangerous to life, can be turned into manure for the garden and the field. Sanitation is thus not a negative programme of clearing away filth but a positive one of creating wealth and life. Such a programme, therefore cannot be a mechanical one. It has to be a programme of true education.

## The Facts:

The facts concerning Sanitation, specially in the villages, are terribly distressing and shameful One has to enter

village almost anywhere by a footpath or a cart-track which is the open public latrine of the village. One cannot walk in a village easily without stepping on nightsoil and filth everywhere. All open spaces, tank-bunds, footpaths and even the places surrounding a well or a temple are all indiscriminately used for answering the calls of nature. If there is a river or a stream near by the banks are similarly polluted and even the water is made impure in every conceivable way. Even the gods in the temples are made victims of human habits of insanitation. The inner sanctuaries are kept unclean, oily and foul-smelling. The children play in filth and parents are unconcerned. Human beings and cattle live in equal conditions of uncleanliness. Skin diseases, specially among children, are rampant. The air, earth and water are polluted in numerous ways.

There is some amount of individual cleanliness even among poor villagers. The people have developed through the centuries a fairly high standard of personal cleanliness. As a whole most people wash their teeth and mouths, bathe at least once a day washing their clothes and observe the rules of "jhootta". But where the people fail hopelessly is in collective cleanliness. People keep their bodies and even the inside of the houses in the villages fairly clean. But what happens beyond is nobody's concern. If there is filth all round the wells, houses, tanks etc; nobody bothers.

THE NATIONAL PROBLEM THEREFORE, IS TO EDUCATE THE PEOPLE TO EXTEND THEIR STANDARDS OF PERSONAL CLEANLINESS INTO THE FIELD OF COLLECTIVE CLEANLINESS. INDIVIDUAL CLEANLINESS WILL AVAIL NOTHING AGANIST COLLECTIVE UNCLEANLINESS.

Part of the fault is undoubtedly the villagers' but the other part certainly is due to the hard conditions of village life. Villages were not planned but grew somehow. The houses are so built with so little interspaces that insanitation grows as a matter of course. There are no public or common latrines or urinals, no drains, no bathing and washing places no dust-bins, in short nothing that can create cleanliness.

**It is therefore not enough to clean up villages; it is equally necessary to provide the necessary conveniences.**

## The Objective :

The object of a real Sanitation programme is not merely the mechanical cleaning up of villages, but the inculcation and development of a strong sanitary consciousness among the people. It is therefore not a problem of brooms and disinfectants only but of the education of the mind. We have to clean up the mental attitude before we can permanently clean up the villages The whole of the Sanitation programme should, therefore, be looked upon as a first-class Adult Education programme centering round Sanitation projects.

The ultimate object, therefore, is to create a national psychology, specially in the rural areas under which the toleration of insanitation will be considered as much a moral evil as cheating, lying or robbing. Any one who tolerates uncleanliness will thus become like one who abetts in moral crime. Just as people lose their sleep thinking of some moral evil they should equally become restless and sensitive to uncleanliness.

## The Approach :

The approach must therefore be a psychological one. It will not do for workers to take the broom or the spade in

their hands and start sweeping or scrapping all at once. We have done this kind of thing for many years without change in the outlook of the people. In many cases we have only exposed ourselves to ridicule. Any precipitate action to begin with will either irritate the villagers or only amuse them. The real job is to make the villagers themselves realise the absolute need for Sanitation and then train them for the work, so that they themselves will not only start cleaning their villages but maintain them clean and tidy from one end of the year to the other. Whatever may be the methods adopted, it should be absolutely clear that the correct approach is the educational approach.

If village Sanitation begins with the village worker himself straightaway doing the work, then, very often it will also end at the same point.

## General Plan of Work:

Insanitation has become so chronic and widespread that we must make a mass effort with a time limit. It would be therefore good to organise a National Sanitation Drive for one year after making the necessary preparations. The general outlines of work for such a national campaign might be as follows :-

1. In as many places as possible one month to be given to make a survey of local conditions of Sanitation This will furnish the data.

2. Training one lakh of villagers in the ideals and methods of Rural Sanitation for one month. All Constructive Work organisations and institutions, schools & colleges and also the departments of sanitation under the Central and State Governments should join in giving the training. Not

only Constructive workers of all kinds but village munsifs, panchayat officers, teachers, police constables, doctors and even the soldiers should be trained for a month for the work. The Railways should also be enlisted and can play a very useful part.

3. A detailed step to step programme of work should be carefully drawn up and broadcast in the various provincial languages among the people. The detailed programme should be such that adults, boys and girls, and even children will have a share in the work. Newspapers and periodicals must join in the programme to carry the detailed instructions to the people and to publish reports of work done.

4. The actual programme of work will consist of the following main items *

( i ) Ensuring clean drinking water by cleaning and repairing wells. ( ii ) Putting up cheap and simple public latrines and bathing enclosures and educating the people to use them properly. ( iii ) Preventing pollution of roads, paths, open spaces and the banks of tanks and rivers, if and when necessary, by prescribing drastic punishment. ( iv ) Visual education through charts, diagrams, pictures, photographs, magic lantern shows, etc, on the evils of in-sanitation and how diseases are caused and can be prevented. ( v ) National leaders to take an active part in the campaign as they are now doing in the food production drive. The President, the Prime-Minister, Ministers everywhere, all well-known Constructive workers etc to set the example by cleaning drains or latrines or streets. ( vi ) Institution and distribution of prizes for villages and mohallas

for the best sanitation work. The best sanitation workers in the country and in the provinces to be declared, 'National Heroes' as they do for the bravest soldiers in the Soviet Union. ( vii ) To work in such a way that at the end of the year there will be permanent Saphai Sanghams or Mandals throughout the country. ( Saphai Mandals to be organised as the Charkha Sangh is organising Kathayi Mandals )

## The Technique :

The following points are important in regard to the work:-

1. The work must be concentrated and not diffused. Each worker must, therefore, draw the circle within which to work and then to study the conditions before starting the work.

2. Each trained worker must recruit at least ten local People to assist before starting the work. That means he must talk to, explain and convince at least ten local people before commencement of work. If there is more than one worker for the circle, then the same ratio must be kept up in recruiting local assistants and friends for the work.

3. After the study of the conditions, the workers and their local assistants should invite a small gathering of local people who are interested in village improvement and discuss the survey with them. This will be the first Adult Education Unit in the village under the scheme. The worker and his assitants must talk well and explain well and then go round from one foul spot to another explaining to small crowds how those spots pollute the earth or water or air and how they can be very fully cleaned up. There should be at this stage no undue hurry in the work. When some interest has been aroused, the worker and his local assistants will place their

detailed proposals for the work before the villagers. Charts and pictures and magic lantern slides, should be used to drive home to the minds of the listeners that dirt is death and that dirt properly treated can become food through manure. The next stage would be to enlist local people to help and then only to take the broom, the spade and the basket, etc, and start attacking a spot so foul that all will agree it is a shame to keep it uncleaned. The first bout of work must be a real hard one and in the result a very nasty spot must have become very clean, so that the villagers can demonstrably see the difference.

4. The first bout of work might last more than a day. But there must be a pause after it is over, in order to study the reaction on the village. If there has been a good reaction then the work should continue. Otherwise more education and explanation must intervene, so that the mind is touched again.

5. People must be approached from house to house to help in cleaning the open spaces, drains etc, near each house. The people in the houses must be educated in cleanliness; otherwise what is cleaned one day will be dirty the next day.

6. As the work proceeds from day to day the worker and his assistants will find out, who are the people in earnest and they will get into close touch with such people. Such people should form a group, meeting from time to time to plan and carry out more and more sanitation projects in the village.

7. The chief worker himself should not become the leader in the work. Local men and women should be given the leadership. Some influential local man or woman should be elected the leader and another such person as the secretary

of the Sanitation Sangham. Every member of the Sangham should personally take part in the work.

8. Later i. e. after a month or two of work the Sangham should regularly organise periodical meetings which will be Adult Education classes. The Sangham should keep in touch with Public Health authorities nearby and take their assistance.

9. When the work has proceeded fairly well the Sangham should raise a small fund locally, asking for an equal amount as grant from the Panchayat or The Rural Development Department. This fund will be used to make instruments, disinfectants and to build urinals, latrines etc.

10. Village drains should be made, each house paying the cost of the length of the drain touching it. (this is now being done in villages in Tamiland under the Firka Development Scheme; the village thus paying entire cost of drainage, the Government giving cement at controlled price and also technical assistance free of cost)

11. The Safai Sanghams or Mandals should develop into permanent institutions in charge of village sanitation.

12. Sanitation is not a negative process of removing dirt. It is a double positive process. First dirt must become manure. Secondly, where there was dirt we must put beauty and sweetness. For instance, around the open spaces in and around village cannot be converted from a filthy condition into healthy places by simply removing the dirt. The temptation will always be there to make it dirty again. The growing of vegetables or flowers or specially the Tulisi plant or the arranging of simple wooden seats as in parks will be positive work in this connection. Thus along with cleaning should come the

laying out village gardens or parks and providing places for children to play games.

13. Not only the worker and his chosen assistants shoud do sanitation work but the whole village should be rallied to join.

## Conclusion.

As the compaign starts and proceeds, more or less on the above pattern, we will find new ideas, new methods and growing enthusiasm. A national sanitation drive will make its own discoveries. It cannot go on the same pattern every where. There will be local amendments and alterations. This will be quite proper and healthy. A careful assessment of achievements should be made at the end of the year and published.

The real essence of the matter is to plan a national campaign and to give it a big push. The campaign will then largely take care of itself. Such a campaign might well generate unforseen forces which might revolutionise village reconstruction in the whole country.

*( This programme is applicable to the towns also with some modifications. )*